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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL CONCERNING THE SITUATION IN ABKHAZIA, GEORGIA

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted in pursuance of resolution 1065 (1996) of 12 July 1996, by which the Security Council decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) for an additional period ending on 31 January 1997. In the same resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to continue to keep the Council regularly informed and to report within three months on the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, including the operations of UNOMIG. In compliance with that request, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Security Council on 10 October 1996 (S/1996/843). The present report provides an update of the situation as at 10 January 1997 and contains recommendations regarding the peacemaking process and the role of the United Nations after the expiry of the mandate of UNOMIG.

II. POLITICAL ASPECTS

2. Key issues of the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process, such as the future political status of Abkhazia and the return of refugees and displaced persons, remain unresolved. However, in discussions with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Edouard Brunner, and his resident Deputy, Mr. Liviu Bota, and with representatives of the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator, both sides have recently reaffirmed their desire for a political solution. The desirability of a political solution has also been underlined in the increasingly frequent direct contacts between the two parties.

3. During his visit to the region from 8 to 10 October 1996, the Special Envoy discussed how to unblock the political stalemate with the President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, and the Abkhaz leader, Mr. Vladislav Ardzinba, and with Ambassador Guennady Ilitchev, Special Envoy of the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Boris Pastukhov. While the Georgian side favoured changing the negotiation format, the Abkhaz side said that it preferred to retain the current approach. Ambassador Ilitchev argued that the potential of the current format had not yet been fully exhausted.

4. The Special Envoy's talks in the region were overshadowed by Mr. Ardzinba's announcement that "parliamentary elections" were to be held on 23 November 1996. In discussing the matter with the Special Envoy, Mr. Ardzinba explained that the five-year term of the current "parliament" had expired. The "parliamentary elections" took place as scheduled and were followed by a second round on 7 December, despite numerous calls by the international community for them not to take place until the conclusion of an agreement on the political status of Abkhazia that respected the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. Another argument against holding the elections was that full participation of all refugees and displaced persons in an organized manner was not assured.

5. On 23 November, the Government of Georgia organized a plebiscite among the refugees and displaced persons from Abkhazia, Georgia, on whether they supported the holding of "parliamentary elections" there prior to the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity and the return of refugees and displaced persons. According to the Government of Georgia, an overwhelming majority of the participants in the plebiscite responded in the negative.

6. On 23 October, the Ambassadors of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, which includes France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, met with President Shevardnadze to deliver a démarche expressing, inter alia, their concern about the serious deterioration with respect to the question of Abkhazia and the lack of significant progress on the key issues of the conflict. The Ambassadors argued that the best strategy for achieving a long-term settlement was to resume dialogue between the parties at all levels. President Shevardnadze replied that the peace process should enter a new phase and the Georgian side was ready to contribute to this.

7. A similar démarche, calling on the Abkhaz side to take more flexible positions in the negotiations, was handed over to Mr. Ardzinba on 7 November by the Secretary-General's resident Deputy Special Envoy on behalf of the Ambassadors of the Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, as Mr. Ardzinba, at that time, was not prepared to meet them. However, on the occasion of the opening of the human rights office in Sukhumi, on 10 December, representatives of the Friends had a lengthy exchange of views with Mr. Ardzinba and other Abkhaz officials on the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict and on how to give fresh impetus to the peace process.

8. A number of bilateral meetings took place between the two sides during the reporting period. The Abkhaz "Foreign Minister", Mr. Konstantin Ozgan, visited Tbilisi on 14 November and met with President Shevardnadze. The two sides reportedly agreed, inter alia, to continue bilateral contacts at both working and higher levels.

9. Further bilateral talks took place in Moscow from 4 to 7 December between the Special Representative of the President of Georgia to the Peace Process, Ambassador Vaza Lordkipanidze, and Mr. Ozgan. The First Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Pastukhov, who had facilitated the meeting, was also present. In pursuance of the understanding reached during this meeting, Ambassador Lordkipanidze met for two days with Mr. Ozgan, on 23 and 24 December, in Gali, in the security zone, to discuss the resumption of the orderly

repatriation of refugees and displaced persons, in particular to the Gali region. The meeting, chaired by Ambassador Ilitchev of the Russian Federation, was also attended by representatives of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNOMIG, the peacekeeping force of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Though no specific agreements were reached, the atmosphere at the meeting was constructive and all sides agreed to continue negotiations in Moscow in January 1997.

10. The Foreign Minister of Georgia, Mr. Irakli Menagarishvili, met with Mr. Ardzinba and Mr. Ozgan in Gagra on 8 January 1997. Following the talks both sides stated that the meeting had been useful, though it had not produced any concrete results. Both sides reportedly discussed a visit by both their respective speakers of parliament to Sukhumi and Tbilisi and a possible meeting between President Shevardnadze and Mr. Ardzinba, and closer cooperation on the Inguri power station issue.

11. During the reporting period, there were a number of meetings between representatives of the Georgian and Russian Governments, including a meeting of the Foreign Minister of Georgia, Mr. Menagarishvili, with his Russian counterpart, Mr. Yevgeni Primakov, in Moscow during the first half of December, where the issue of a political settlement in Abkhazia, Georgia, the return of refugees and displaced persons and the mandate of the CIS peacekeeping force were reportedly on the agenda. A delegation of the Russian State Duma, headed by its Speaker, Mr. Gennady Seleznev, visited Georgia in the first half of December.

III. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

12. United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have helped alleviate human suffering in Abkhazia, Georgia, during the last three months. Humanitarian organizations have continued to focus on the most pressing needs, especially food, medicine and clothing. They have also increased self-help means of assistance by providing, inter alia, inputs to local communities for emergency repairs to schools and hospitals and by supporting families with the means to harvest and preserve fruit and vegetables for the winter months. However, of continued concern are the psychosocial needs of the population, especially children and adolescents, who have received some support from local non-governmental organizations but require substantial and urgent assistance from the international community.

13. The mine problem in the Gali district has worsened during the last three months, with mines killing or maiming innocent civilians and threatening the population in the district. Mines continue to prevent humanitarian organizations from working in all areas of the district outside of the town of Gali. This is of particular concern as reports from civilians who have travelled to villages indicate a precarious humanitarian situation that must be addressed as soon as possible.

14. The spontaneous return of displaced persons to the Gali district appears to have slowed during the past two months, most likely because of the increase in violence in the area. In the light of the discussions that took place at the Gali meeting on 23 and 24 December, humanitarian organizations, in particular UNHCR, have begun contingency planning to support the return of refugees and displaced persons.

15. In pursuance of Security Council resolution 1077 (1996) of 22 October 1996, the United Nations office for the protection and promotion of human rights in Abkhazia, to which reference is made in the Secretary-General's report of 1 July 1996 (S/1996/507 and Add.1, paras. 17 and 18) was opened by the Head of Mission of UNOMIG on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 10 December, International Human Rights Day, in close consultation with the authorities concerned. Representatives of the Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, representatives of OSCE and members of non-governmental and international organizations present in Georgia, as well as Abkhaz leaders and local authorities, attended the opening ceremony. In a statement on the occasion, President Shevardnadze welcomed the opening of the office. The immediate priorities of the office are monitoring the human rights situation in Abkhazia and translating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into the Abkhaz language. Consultations are under way with OSCE on a memorandum of understanding spelling out the modalities of cooperation between the two organizations with regard to the work of the office.

IV. OPERATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA

16. During the reporting period, UNOMIG continued to operate in parts of the security and restricted weapons zones and in the Kodori Valley (see attached map). The mine threat is still restricting the Mission's ability to conduct mobile patrols in the security and restricted weapons zones of the Gali sector, but patrols continue along the main road - the M-27 - as well as in the town of Gali. The deployment of the Mission has not changed since the previous report of 10 October (S/1996/843). The number of military observers in the mission area is currently 125 (see annex). In anticipation of the arrival of the engineering support personnel who will undertake mine-detection and clearing (S/1996/843, para. 31), it is planned to reduce that number gradually to 116 during the forthcoming six months, should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG.

17. As mentioned in the previous report (ibid., para. 17), UNOMIG has worked assiduously to compensate for the lack of information resulting from the closure of the team bases in the security zone of the Gali sector. Observers in the Zugdidi sector continue to monitor activities south of the Inguri River and in the pockets north of it that are under Georgian control. In addition, the Chief Military Observer has expanded the area covered by the foot patrols in the Gali sector so as to include the areas on the banks of the Inguri River and in the vicinity of the M-27 where the internally displaced persons generally tend to settle. In those communities, as in other areas it patrols, the Mission meets

regularly with village mayors and others to promote dialogue and build confidence among the inhabitants.

18. After a thorough review of the situation, UNOMIG again decided, as it had last winter, to close the Kodori Valley team base at Adjara temporarily with effect from 29 November. However, road and weather conditions permitting, patrols visit the checkpoints of the CIS peacekeeping force and of the Abkhaz army. The base will be reopened in the spring.

19. The Chief Military Observer has continued to chair the weekly police meeting (S/1996/507 and Add.1, para. 23), which is intended as a forum where the head of the Gali militia and the chief of the Zugdidi police discuss security matters and exchange information. While the expansion of this meeting to include representatives of the CIS peacekeeping force and the security services of both sides (S/1996/843, para. 19) did increase its effectiveness for a while, the subsequent absence (beginning on 16 October) of representatives of the Abkhaz militia and security service has forced the Chief Military Observer to suspend the meeting until the Abkhaz side resumes its participation. Meanwhile, the Chief Military Observer regularly meets separately with the police and security services from both sides. The weekly quadripartite meetings, chaired by the Commander of the CIS peacekeeping force and attended by the Chief Military Observer, as well as the local representatives of the Georgian and Abkhaz administrations and their security services, continue to enable both sides to discuss security and humanitarian issues.

20. UNOMIG continues to cooperate with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations working on both sides of the Inguri River. At the sector level, UNOMIG medical teams, in addition to their primary task, have again provided first aid to CIS peacekeeping force personnel and to the local population and have often assisted with medical evacuations.

V. SITUATION ON THE GROUND

A. General

21. The situation in the Gali security and restricted weapons zones has remained unsettled and violence increased perceptibly between the anniversary date of the fall of Sukhumi in late September and the end of the Abkhaz "parliamentary elections". In the final weeks of the reporting period there was a marked increase in acts of violence, which involved especially the indiscriminate laying of mines. The casualties resulting from the explosion of those mines were exclusively civilian and mostly among the Georgian population. The manner in which the acts of violence were executed indicates that the groups committing them are well armed, large and familiar with the region, and apparently intent on destabilizing the area. The situation in the Zugdidi sector was also tense at times, often as a result of rumours and misinformation.

22. Mine-laying and attacks on the CIS peacekeeping force and the Abkhaz authorities also continued during the reporting period. The CIS force, in conjunction with UNOMIG, again used the quadripartite meetings to protest against such actions. The Abkhaz militia conducted new "sweep" operations in

the security zone, but did not make massive arrests as it had on previous occasions. The CIS peacekeeping force accompanied the militia on many of the operations in order to monitor their execution. Although the operations were conducted in a relatively restrained and unprovocative manner, the animosity of the largely Georgian population towards the militia continues to be generally strong, particularly in the south-western part of the Gali security zone.

23. During the reporting period, some UNOMIG military observers were threatened at gunpoint, others were the victims of theft and vandalism, but none were harmed. In addition, there was a bomb threat against the UNOMIG headquarters building in Sukhumi during the weekend of the "parliamentary elections". While UNOMIG employs local guards to secure its sector headquarters, their performance is not always reliable. For this reason, the CIS peacekeeping force lent its support to augment local security arrangements during that period and its assistance was particularly useful in providing additional protection to the UNOMIG headquarters in Sukhumi and Gali.

B. Security and restricted weapons zones

24. Several murders, kidnappings, attacks, explosions and acts of looting were reported during the period under review. On 3 October, an Abkhaz army officer was shot dead near an Abkhaz observation post along the Gali Canal. On 28 October, an explosion occurred at the polling station in Achigvara, causing extensive damage. On 3 November, several observation posts of the Abkhaz militia and the CIS peacekeeping force, as well as other targets in Gali town, were attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and bombs. On 14 November, two Abkhaz soldiers were kidnapped in the restricted weapons zone and taken to the Georgian side. Ih addition, the Abkhaz "parliamentary elections" were preceded by a campaign of violence that continued during the elections throughout the Gali security and restricted weapons zones. Many attacks and explosions occurred at or close to Abkhaz polling stations. On 8 December, an Abkhaz army inspection team was ambushed near the Gali Canal. The incident caused the death of three officers, as well as that of a civilian who was caught in the crossfire. On 9 December, in a possible retaliation for the previous incident, three Georgian members of the same family were killed and another wounded in the vicinity of the 8 December incident. On 26 December, an Abkhaz observation post was attacked by several men armed with rockets and small arms and, on 31 December, an Abkhaz businessman was killed in an ambush on the M-27 south of Gali town. In addition to these incidents, four Abkhaz soldiers and militiamen were killed and another two wounded in accidental shootings or brawls.

25. During the reporting period UNOMIG was not involved in any exchange of hostages or of remains of people killed during the war. However, the Mission provided communications and transportation when local leaders from Zugdidi and Gali directly negotiated a body exchange on 5 November. The Commissions for Missing Persons on both sides began discussing the return of approximately 100 bodies of Georgian soldiers who were killed in a plane crash during the war, but negotiations were suspended pending the release of two Abkhaz soldiers kidnapped on 14 November.

26. Both sides continued to violate the Moscow Agreement of 14 May 1994. Between 10 September 1996 and 9 January 1997, UNOMIG reported 8 such violations by the Abkhaz side and 172 by the Georgian side. The majority of the violations, which were protested on the spot, were committed by off-duty unarmed soldiers entering the security zone for private purposes. However, several violations were more serious. Three of them occurred in the Zugdidi sector at a time of high tension and rumours about Georgia's alleged plans to send forces into the Gali sector to prevent the holding of the elections. On 20 November, a Georgian internal forces convoy of 17 vehicles, including 4 armoured ones, which were reportedly on a training exercise, were discovered in the restricted weapons zone. The same day, a paramilitary group of some 50 men, many of whom were internally displaced persons with connections to known insurgent groups, was discovered in a camp in the restricted weapons zone. UNOMIG was initially refused access to investigate. However, following numerous protests, UNOMIG was eventually allowed to visit the unit. The Georgian security service informed the Mission that the unit had been formed to control amnestied criminal elements who had committed crimes in Abkhazia and were now living in the Zugdidi area. They had been given the choice of either joining the unit or being expelled. Also on 20 November, a Georgian artillery unit was seen in the restricted weapons zone and UNOMIG military observers were again denied permission to investigate. Continued protests eventually enabled UNOMIG to enter the camp, where no artillery weapons were found. In addition to the above violations, several Georgian police armoured vehicles entered the restricted weapons zone on 19 and 20 December, reportedly on a training exercise.

C. Kodori Valley

27. The situation in the Kodori Valley remains calm, thanks largely to the continued presence of the Georgian police unit deployed in the area on 6 July 1996 (S/1996/843, para. 28). UNOMIG continues to report a low level of crime in the valley, as well as a greater sense of security among the indigenous Svanetian inhabitants. Occasionally, UNOMIG conducts meetings with Svanetian representatives in the valley. The Mission's relationship with the local population is excellent.

D. The mine problem

28. Mines continue to be a most serious problem in the Gali security and restricted weapons zones. Indeed, the problem has worsened as a result of the use of new types of mines with different initiating techniques.

29. The incident of 27 September (ibid., para. 24) was the first instance of a mine placed directly on the M-27, which is vital to UNOMIG operations. It was also the first time that directional (off-route) anti-personnel mines were used. Since then, UNOMIG has recorded several other cases that demonstrate the wide availability of, and the danger posed by, such mines. In those cases, three different types of initiators were used, including, most significantly, infra-red beams. Other types of anti-personnel mines have also been used, although not extensively, but they continue to constitute a serious threat.

Thus, on 30 November, a civilian was killed when he stepped on a mine on the Inguri River bank. Anti-tank mines also continue to be used frequently. Some, equipped with timing devices, are used as explosive for demolition purposes; others are laid for psychological effect and are easily found and dismantled; yet others are laid covertly and indiscriminately. Four of the latter kind were used recently in incidents involving one CIS peacekeeping armoured vehicle and three Georgian civilian vehicles, which killed six civilians and wounded nine persons, including one CIS peacekeeping force soldier. On 3 January 1997, a civilian bus detonated an anti-tank mine, killing one civilian.

30. In view of this situation, the current restrictions on vehicle patrolling in the Gali security and restricted weapons zones continue and will remain until the Mission is provided with the required logistic support. In the meantime, additional precautions have been taken on the M-27, including the wearing of protective clothing by UNOMIG personnel and visitors and the organization of convoys with at least two UNOMIG vehicles and, when necessary, with a CIS peacekeeping force armoured escort.

31. Council members will recall that in order to improve safety along the M-27, the Mission has begun resurfacing those parts of the road which are judged to be especially vulnerable to mine-laying (S/1996/843, para. 30). In addition, UNOMIG recently conducted an extensive survey of the main roads leading to the former team bases in the Gali sector, which will also be resurfaced with the help of funds generously made available by the Republic of Korea and Germany. The Chief Military Observer has directed that the resurfacing of those roads begin immediately, but the project has been delayed by the lack of asphalt and inclement weather.

32. In his report of 10 October, the Secretary-General informed the Security Council that mine-protected vehicles were on their way to the mission area where they were scheduled to arrive a few weeks later (ibid., para. 31). Regrettably, however, as a result of financial and other difficulties involving the shipping company and the ship's owners, the vessel carrying the vehicles became caught in a legal dispute and the deployment of the equipment in question was seriously delayed. The legal issues have now been resolved and the vehicles are expected to reach the mission area shortly.

33. The Secretariat is still awaiting a reply from a Government, which is known to have suitable equipment, regarding the provision of mine-detection vehicles and support personnel (ibid.). In the interim, a concept of operations has been developed that entails a combination of foot and standing patrols augmented by helicopter observation. The helicopter support would improve UNOMIG operational effectiveness by allowing the Mission to patrol areas beyond what is possible today and cover all of the security zone. In addition, it would enable the Mission to patrol parts of the restricted weapons zone, as well as to provide back-up medical support to the observers. It should be noted that UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force already have a back-up system in place that alerts the force in case one of the foot patrols operating in the security zone finds itself in danger. The Chief Military Observer believes that the air support will facilitate the reopening of team bases in the Gali security zone and permit foot patrolling under acceptable security conditions in otherwise inaccessible areas.

34. In their recent démarches to President Shevardnadze and Mr. Ardzinba (see para. 6 above), the representatives in Tbilisi of the group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia expressed their concern about the intensification of violence by armed groups in the security and restricted weapons zones, which is creating great danger not only for the CIS peacekeeping force and UNOMIG, but also for the civilian population. In addition, they called on both sides to refrain from any action that could contribute to the heightening of tensions and to act against those who are destabilizing the situation.

VI. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA AND THE COLLECTIVE PEACEKEEPING FORCES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

35. Cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force has improved considerably. For the past several months now, the force has demonstrated its readiness to support UNOMIG, within the limits of its resources, and has become more mobile in the Gali sector. In particular, it has escorted UNOMIG patrols along the M-27 when the situation was especially unstable and it has conducted joint patrols with armoured vehicles, which has enabled UNOMIG to re-enter some areas of the Gali security zone. In addition, the CIS peacekeeping force adopted a more active concept of operations during the Abkhaz "parliamentary elections", thus contributing significantly to their relatively peaceful outcome, and ensured the security of UNOMIG facilities. Close cooperation between both medical staff has also continued.

36. On 17 October, the CIS Council of Heads of State decided to expand the mandate of the force and to extend it until 31 January 1997 (S/1996/874, annex). Subsequently, the Commander of the CIS peacekeeping force signed an agreement with the local Abkhaz authorities that calls for joint operations and coordination of efforts to fight armed groups in the area. However, the force has not so far received any reinforcement to carry out its new tasks. The Chief Military Observer has advised the Secretary-General that the expanded mandate of the force does not affect the Mission's concept of operations or require a change in its own mandate.

VII. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

37. By its resolution 50/237 of 7 June 1996, the General Assembly appropriated an amount of $17,089,600 (gross) for UNOMIG for the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997. This authorization is subject to the decision of the Security Council to extend the mandate of the Mission.

38. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of UNOMIG beyond 31 January 1997, as is recommended in para. 47 below, the monthly cost of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 1997 will be limited to the appropriation contained in General Assembly resolution 50/237 (equivalent to $1,424,100 per month). The Secretary-General will report to the Assembly on the additional requirements needed, if any, for the maintenance of the Mission beyond 30 June 1997.

39. As at 31 December 1996, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNOMIG Special Account amounted to $6.7 million. The total of outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at that date amounted to $1.6 billion.

VIII. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

40. During 1996 the Government of Georgia has continued the implementation of the economy recovery programme. Economic stabilization progressed, giving rise to an increase in economic, technical and development-oriented assistance. In parallel, emergency and humanitarian aid decreased continuously. However, humanitarian support continues to be needed, particularly in the areas of reconstruction and rehabilitation. Such activities, in particular in the areas of education and health, are essential to complement the efforts of the Government to achieve macroeconomic stability in the country, because they will minimize the risk that social tensions might derail the process of economic reform. The Government continues to ensure proper coordination of donor activities with assistance from various United Nations and other organizations.

41. United Nations operational activities for development are being coordinated by the United Nations Resident Coordinator. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing the Government with advice on policy and financial assistance for capacity-building in the economic and social sectors.

IX. OBSERVATIONS

42. In the most recent report to the Security Council concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia (S/1996/843), the Secretary-General indicated that he would consider what steps could be taken by the United Nations to reinvigorate the peace process. He held consultations to that end with the Special Envoy and his Deputy in New York in late November 1996.

43. Recently the parties themselves have begun to revitalize the peace process by meeting bilaterally at high levels. This is an encouraging development and the Secretary-General appeals to both sides to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their bilateral contacts. In the end it is the parties to the conflict who have to make peace.

44. The role of the United Nations at present should be to support the efforts of the two sides to arrive at mutually acceptable compromises that would underpin an overall settlement. To that end, it is intended to initiate contacts in the region in the near future with the two sides with a view to assisting them in their apparent attempt to unblock the peace process. The modalities of cooperation between the United Nations and the Russian Federation, in its capacity as facilitator in the Georgian/Abkhaz peace process, merit early discussion and this matter will be pursued with the Russian authorities.

45. There are a number of possibilities for reviving the role of the United Nations in the peace process. One would be to initiate United Nations-led expert meetings at the local level. Such meetings could cover fields such as

energy, transportation and communications. Such discussions would help the parties to recognize their common interest in building a strong economic and social base throughout Georgia. Another possibility would be to resume United Nations-led negotiations on the future political status of Abkhazia within the territorial integrity of Georgia.

46. As reflected in the present report, conditions in the Gali sector have not improved. Acts of violence continue to be committed, some of which appear to be organized by armed groups operating from south of the Inguri River and to be beyond the control of the Government of Georgia. In addition, the increased sophistication demonstrated by armed groups responsible for the more recent acts of violence is cause for concern. This situation, if allowed to continue, will inevitably make it more difficult for UNOMIG to contribute to the creation of conditions conducive to the safe and orderly return of refugees once that process finally resumes. The Abkhaz militia, for its part, does not seem to have the capacity to control these groups and the CIS peacekeeping force, which itself has been targeted by these elements, has so far not been able to suppress them. The Secretary-General therefore calls on all concerned to take effective measures to end a situation that can only have negative effects for the return of peace to the region.

47. In spite of the difficult circumstances in which UNOMIG has to operate, the Mission's presence continues to be a stabilizing factor in the area and provides useful support to the political process. Accordingly, bearing in mind the wish of the international community that the political process be reactivated to reach a comprehensive political settlement, The Secretary-General recommends that the Security Council extend the mandate of UNOMIG for an additional period of six months ending on 31 July 1997.

48. The Secretary-General wishes to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Germany for contributing to the voluntary fund established under Security Council resolution 937 (1994) of 21 July 1994 and calls on other Member States to make similar contributions.

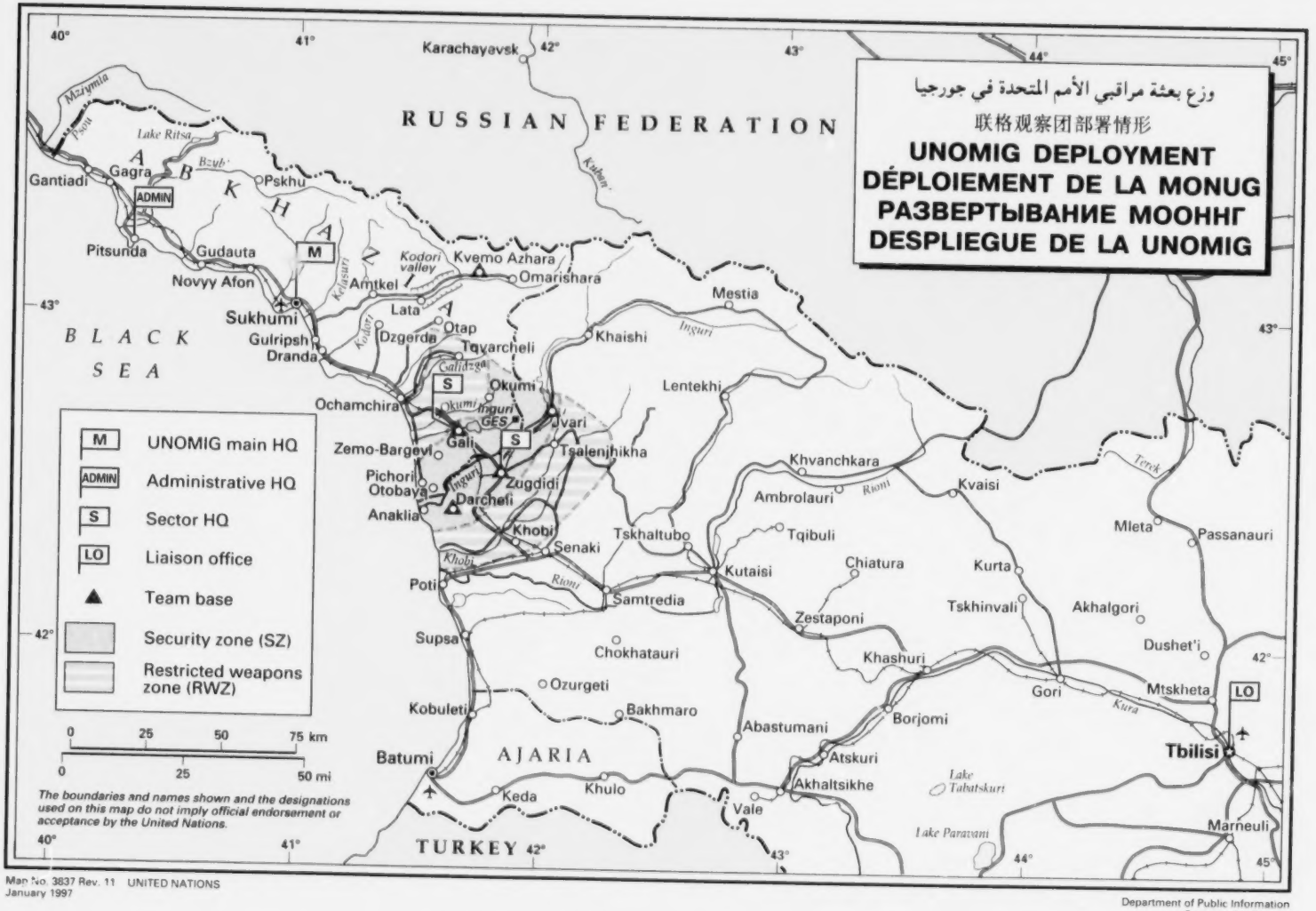
49. Finally, thanks are due to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Edouard Brunner, his Deputy and Head of Mission of UNOMIG, Mr. Liviu Bota, the Chief Military Observer, Major-General Per Källström, and all the military and civilian personnel under their command, for their dedication and perseverance in carrying out, under difficult and at times dangerous conditions, the tasks entrusted to them by the Security Council.

Annex

Composition of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia as at 9 January 1997

Country	Military observers
Albania	1
Austria	4
Bangladesh	10
Cuba	4
Czech Republic	4
Denmark	5
Egypt	5
France	5
Germany	10
Greece	4
Hungary	6
Indonesia	5
Jordan	7
Pakistan	7
Poland	5
Republic of Korea	5
Russian Federation	3
Sweden	8
Switzerland	5
Turkey	5
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	9
United States of America	4
Uruguay	4
Total	125[a]

[a]The number of military observers may vary owing to rotations.



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